

# *Massachusetts High School Football Coaches Association*



## *2021 STATE PLAYOFF TALKING POINTS*

# Motivation

*“Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.”*

- Vince Lombardi



# Mission Statement

The MHSFCA's mission is to promote, provide and discuss ideas that will solve the problems identified to build a statewide football playoff system that works around Thanksgiving.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with the MIAA Football Committee to design a system that meets the standard set by the TMC and receives the same considerations as other sports.



# Opening Remarks

The MHSFCA strongly believes that the current playoff plan, which began in 2013 and will end in 2020, was a necessary step to help Massachusetts football create a statewide tournament. Some of the many benefits of the expiring plan include; qualifying without winning your league championship, school specific divisional placement, sectional champions and a true state champion in each division. The plan did unite the state cutting the awarded championships from 19 to 8. However, the plan does have some flaws.

When the TMC's *Statewide Tournament Proposal* was approved this winter, it addressed some of the problems of the current plan.



# Opening Remarks

TMC's plan established criteria to build statewide; *Enrollment-Based Divisions*, *Qualifying & Seeding Methods* and an *Equal Path* to a championship.

Passing this plan is particularly beneficial to football since the Central and Western sections only contain 88 of the current 280 teams. Furthermore, 61 of the 88 schools in this area are division 5 or smaller which forced a majority of the Central and Western into improper divisions.

The MHSFCA applauds this step and urges the Football Committee to now fix the other problems.



# Topics of Discussion

## Key Factors

### 1. Football is Unique

- The TMC plan lumped football in with team sports that play 20 games

### 2. Divisions

- In order to appropriately account for the variety of enrollments and the amount of smaller schools, we need more divisions
- 8 divisions provides balance and an equal opportunity

### 3. Length of Regular Season

- Need a longer regular season
- TMC voted to shorten the football season without discussion with this committee
- Wish to eliminate consolation games
- Understand less teams will qualify



# Topics of Discussion

## Key Factors

### 4. Post-Season Tournament

- Need a true post-season tournament like other MIAA teams
- Playing part of the tournament in season has not been as successful as hoped
- Caused AD's additional work scheduling FR, JV and consolation games

### 5. Percentage of Teams to Qualify

- Understand less teams will qualify
- Research tells us the top 20-30% of teams should qualify
- We believe 8-teams from each division should qualify
- This can be accomplished with 8 divisions



# Topics of Discussion

## Key Factors

### 6. Thanksgiving – Elephant in the room

- Need to make Thanksgiving relevant again
- In 2014, 87% of member schools who responded to a MIAA were in favor of keeping traditional Thanksgiving games
- Attendance and revenue is down
- Have caused Thanksgiving rivals to play in the regular season.
- Created situations when team's holdout their players or cancel the Thanksgiving game





# MHSFCA Recommendation

## We Can Address These Concerns?

- Acknowledge Football is Unique
- Establish 8 Divisions
- Increase the Regular Season
- Eliminate Consolation Games
- Make Thanksgiving Relevant Again
- Improve Player Safety
- Have a Firm Schedule for the Season
- Have a True Post-Season Tournament
- Include the Top 20-28% of Teams per Division



# Alternative Plan

## Post-Thanksgiving, 8-Team

### 10 Game Regular Season, 8 Divisions, 8-Team Tournament

- Based off the Connecticut high school plan
- Teams can schedule 10 games in 12 weeks, including Thanksgiving
- Two bye weeks must be taken, one between weeks 4-6 and Week 11 (unless not playing on Thanksgiving)
- The regular season ends on Thanksgiving
- The 8 highest-rated MaxPreps teams per division advance
- The Playoffs begin on Tuesday night (5 days later) -The higher seeds will host unless they lack lights and/or grass ruled unplayable
- The Semi-Final will be played Sunday (5 days later) at a neutral site
- The Super Bowl the following Saturday at a neutral site

### Recommended Amendments, Not required

- All practices after Thanksgiving are uppers only (helmets & shoulder pads)
- The first game/meet or competition of winter sports be pushed back 5 days. This will allow winter sports to start as scheduled (Monday after Thanksgiving) and increase their pre-season to 15 days.



# Alternative Plan

## Post-Thanksgiving, 8-Team

### 10 Game Regular Season, 8 Divisions, 8-Team Tournament

#### Benefits

- 8 Divisions in line with other New England States playing on Thanksgiving (Connecticut – 141 teams/4 divisions)
- Makes Thanksgiving relevant again
- Playoff qualification includes all games / League Championships will matter
- Moves the playoffs back to the post-season, like other MIAA sports
- Eliminates Consolation games, like other MIAA team sports
- Adds two byes into the season for player safety
- Relieves Athletic Directors from needing to schedule JV, Freshman, or late-notice playoff/consolation games
- Top 20-28% of teams per division qualify
- MIAA can run the games from the home team's venue

#### Arguments / Disadvantages

- The one-week extension of the season will require a rule change



# Proposed Statewide Alignment

## Eight Statewide Divisions

Divisions	Central	North	South	West	Total Teams per Division	Percentage of Teams that Qualify
One	1	12	14	1	28	28.6%
Two	5	15	12	0	32	25.0%
Three	5	7	16	8	36	22.2%
Four	3	14	13	3	33	24.2%
Five	9	12	13	4	38	21.1%
Six	8	13	11	3	35	22.9%
Seven	10	11	14	3	38	21.1%
Eight	11	8	7	14	40	20.0%
Total in Section	52	92	100	36	280	23.1%

### Graph assumptions

- Current Alignment approved
- 8 teams per division advance to playoffs
- Thanksgiving final game of regular season



# Motivation

*“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.”*

- Vince Lombardi

